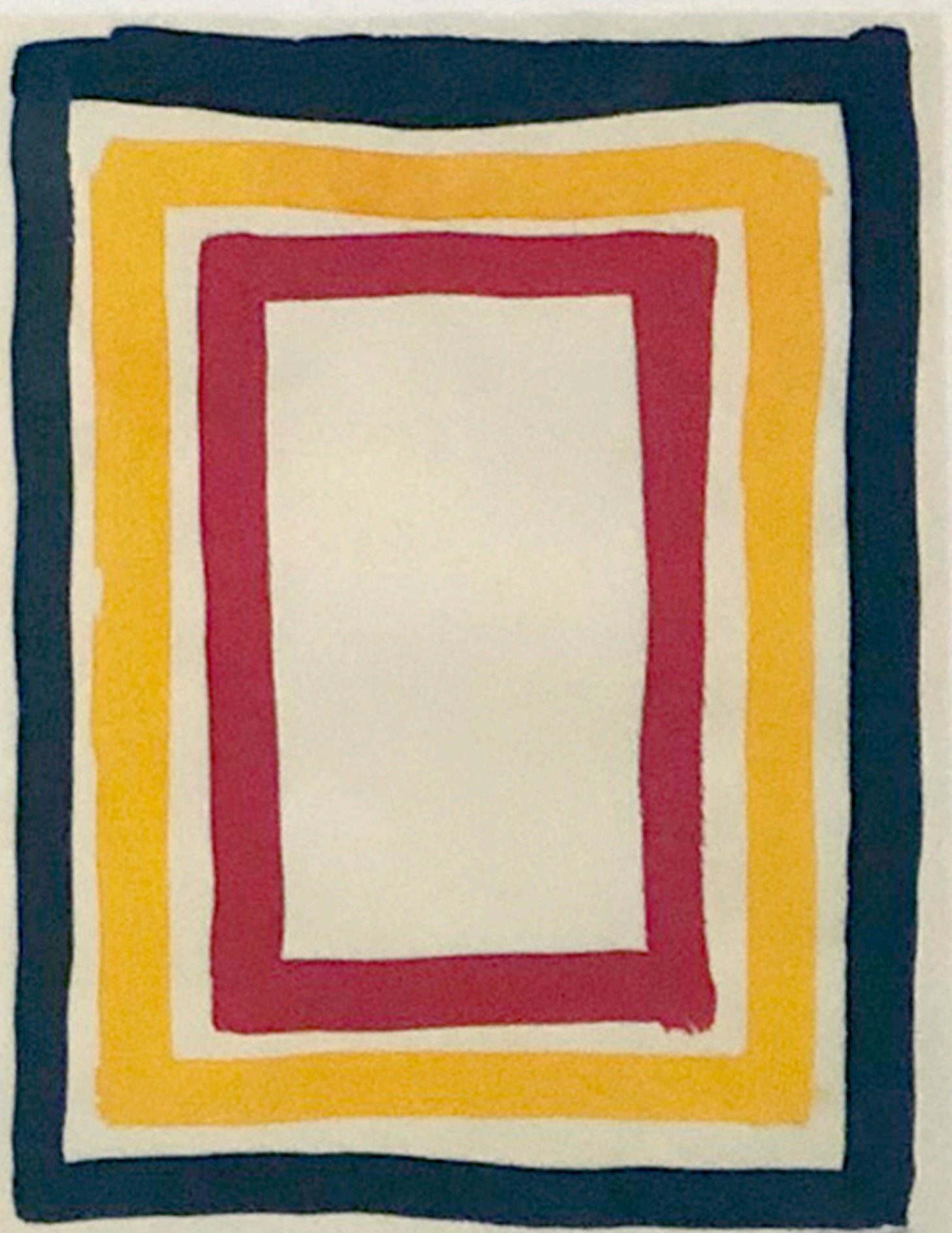
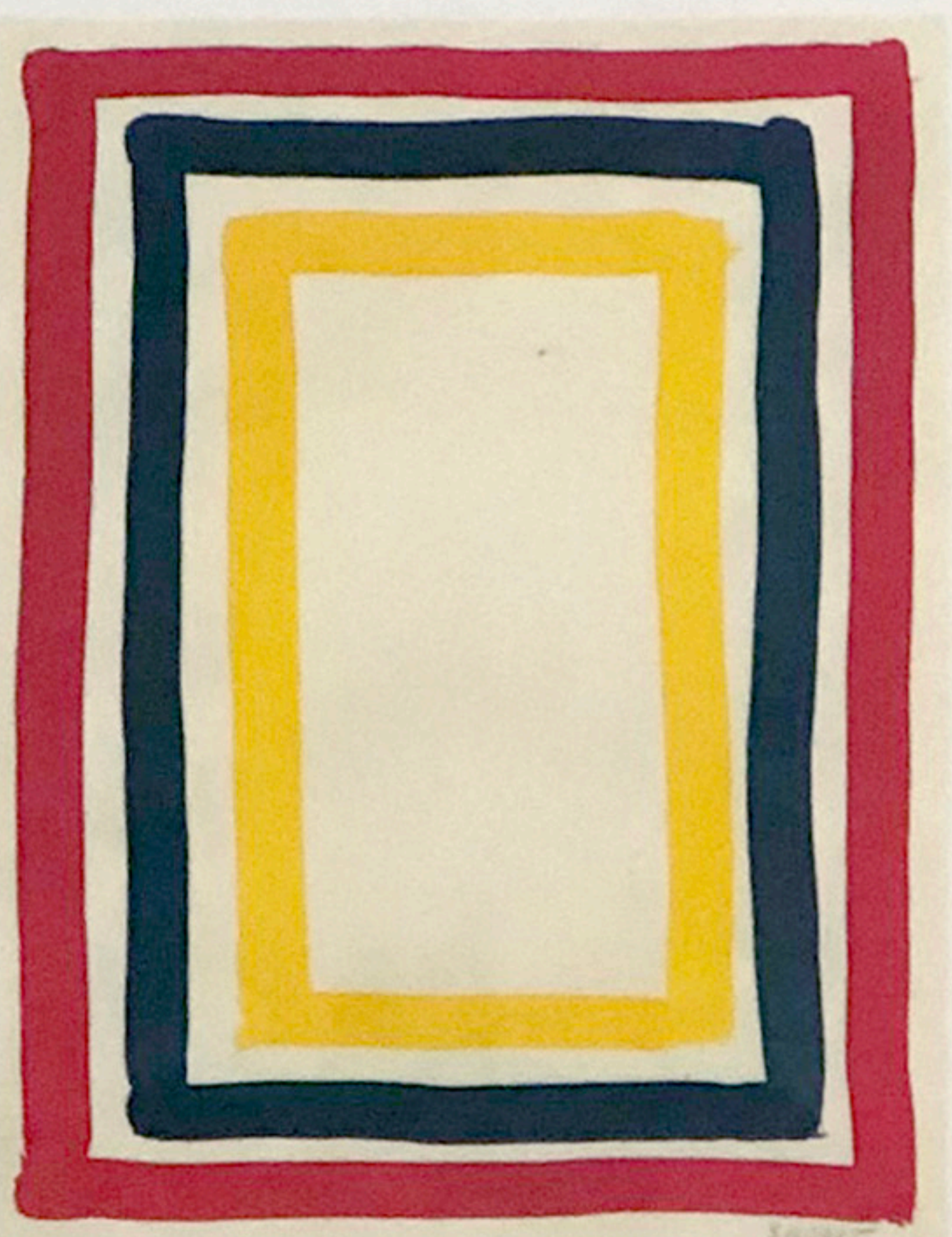
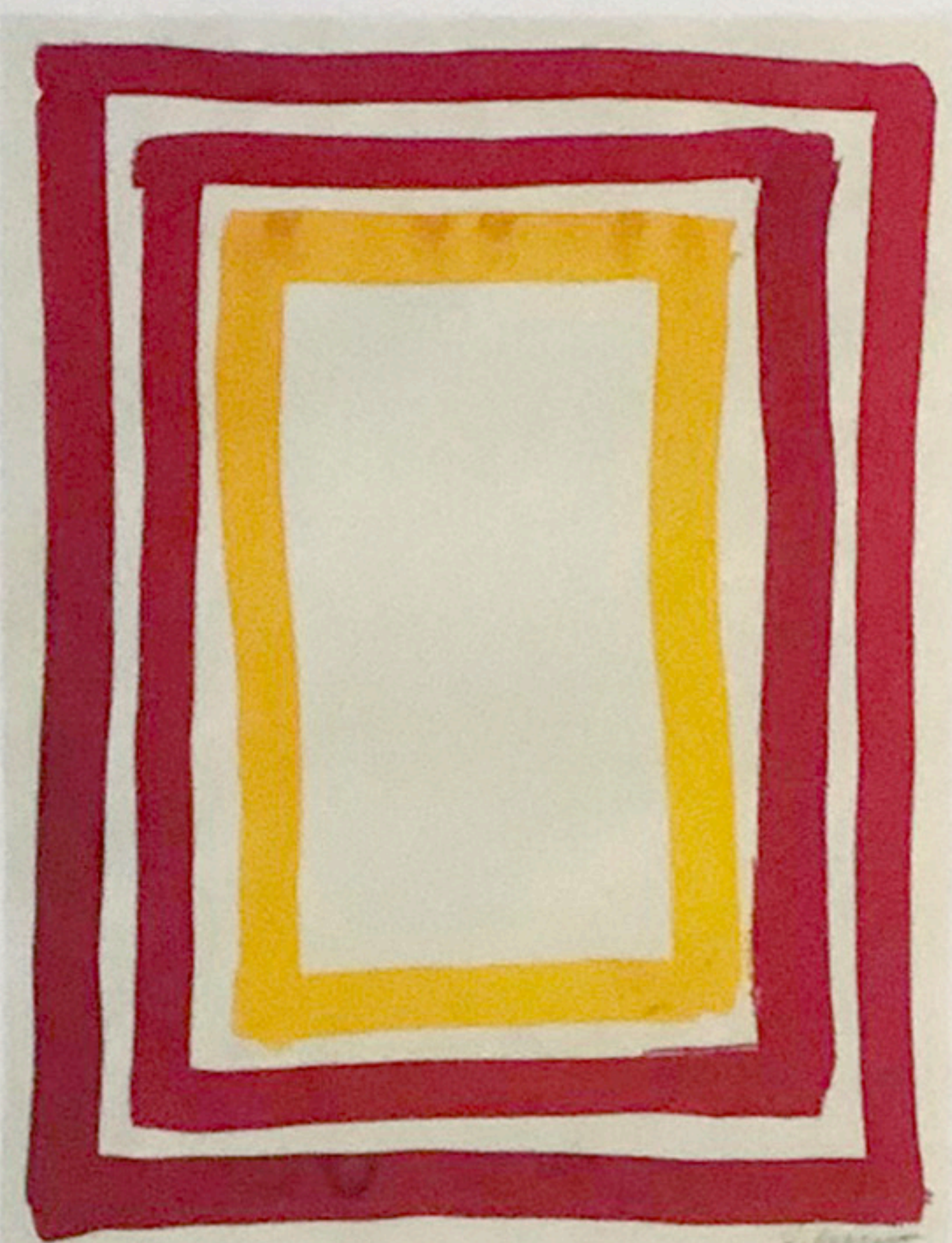


DRAWINGS of CHOICE

from a New York Collection



Marsha Cottrell

Born 1964, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, works in Brooklyn, New York

18, left

Untitled, 1998

Toner on paper
11 × 8 ½ inches

19, right

Untitled, 1998

Toner on paper
11 × 8 ½ inches

Marsha Cottrell's computer-assisted works on paper broaden the notion of drawing by introducing new materials and processes to the medium.¹ Understood as a manual rendering of thought processes, drawing can function as a projection of the artist's conceptual plan for a final work. As a stylistic language it also distinguishes the individual artist's hand. However, Cottrell's delicate drawings stand as independent formal explorations not adjunct to painting or sculpture. They are self-sufficient visual objects made by modest means. In the *Untitled* works (1998), Cottrell manipulated the punctuation marks in a word-processing program and laser-printed them in toner (plastic iron oxide) onto yellowish Japanese paper in standard 11 × 8 ½-inch format. The tiny, crisp black marks are dispersed around the center of the paper surface, creating a faint illusion of space. Cottrell doubly separates the marks from their conventional origin: First, by the act of typing and laser printing she disengages the activity of mark-making from the existential gesture of the hand. Second, she estranges the keyboard marks from their customary function, inverting these neutral and banal marks into personal, expressive gestures.

Around 1997 Cottrell started to use the computer as a drawing tool instead of such conventional materials as graphite, ink and gouache,

It was really exciting to me that I could have the freedom to organize these tiny, sharp and very black particles independent of a conventional typewriter/word-processing grid. It was an intuitive decision

to use typewritten information....I wanted most to see how far I could go staying as close to the most straightforward application of the computer as possible.²

Cottrell estranges familiar marks and signs by misusing or abusing their functions. It is this creative misuse of the computer that characterizes her mechanical drawings as an alternative mode of expression.³ Despite removing the hand's trace from her work, she does not negate the manual process of drawing in a specific time and space. Instead, her artistic appropriation of word-processing technology humanizes the mechanical nature of the medium.

Cottrell's typed drawings exist somewhere between writing and drawing. She draws with punctuation marks, "the pauses within speech."⁴ Neither discursive nor figurative, the tiny marks look like vestigial hieroglyphs that seek verbalization. Using the machine as a "poetic device," Cottrell's work pushes the ever-expanding boundaries of drawing.⁵ ✚ EYJ

¹ Using the term "computer-assisted" instead of "computer-generated" for her work, Cottrell emphasizes artistic interventions involved in her drawings. "They are," she remarks, "derived from a very human, improvisational process." Marsha Cottrell, electronic correspondence with author, 6 May 2002.

² Marsha Cottrell, electronic correspondence with author, 12 March 2002.

³ "Cyber Drawings," press release for the exhibition *Cyber Drawings*, Cristinerose Gallery, January 6–February 12, 2000, unpaginated.

⁴ Sarah Schmerler, exhibition review of *Cyber Drawings*, *Art on Paper* (May–June 2000): 81.

⁵ *Ibid.*

